

Sun Inn and Spout House

[Bygone Bilsdale Review](#)

Last updated 21.05.2016

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Sources

An excellent summary about the Sun Inn is on the [Ainsley family web site](#) on the page written by Alyson Jackson dedicated to the memory of her relatives, William and Madge Ainsley

Information about [Ralf Headley's painting](#) is in John Millard's blog, *extract below*

A [tribute to William Ainsley](#) was published in the Northern Echo on 3rd January 2013

Article by Harry Mead in the Northern Echo 1971? – interview with Bill Weatherill whose family lived at Spout House *copy of the article is on the Group's computer*

other sources summarised below

extract from Bygone Bilsdale, 1992

The name Spout House is derived from a spring which rises in the hillside beside the house. The house, which dates from about 1550, is believed to be the only well preserved example of a 16th century cruck framed house in the north of England. There may have been an earlier building on the site, dating back to the 14th century, but there is no evidence now. Starting life as a farm tenant's cottage, it continued as a farm even though in 1714 it was licensed as an ale house and became known as the Sun Inn. *Check - wasn't the original building known as the Sun Inn* Thus the farmer by day became a landlord by night, a situation which still exists today.

Originally the house was single storey, but as the roads improved the inn became very popular with travellers and in the 17th century was extended by creating three rooms in the loft space. Even so, it must, on occasions, have been very crowded as, apart from parties of travellers, in 1851, for example, there were 14 members of the Ainsley family in residence. Even so, eventually larger premises became necessary and in 1914 a new Sun Inn was built across the farm yard. The old house was left undisturbed, even the furniture was left in place and when in 1979 the North York Moors National Park Committee took on the repairs, it was possible to re-open the house, appearing just as it had been left in its most prosperous years.

The first recorded tenant of "Spoot Howse" was John Kirk in 1637, possibly a descendant of the Scottish soldiers retreating with Robert de Brus in 1320, he was then a tenant of the 2nd Duke of Buckingham.

In 1765 Stephen Hoggard became tenant and licensee, a position he held for 57 years. His supplies of beer came from York and later, Tadcaster, travelling via Thirsk and Sutton Bank, using a horse drawn vehicle. Often it proved too much for the horses and barrels had to be unloaded and rolled up the hill by hand. Many of the original bills are still in the possession of the Ainsley family.

The first William Ainsley took over the tenancy from Stephen Hoggard in 1823 and the eldest son has been named William ever since.

A proud possession of the Ainsley family is a handsome painting by Ralf Headley. painted in 1895, of a meeting of some members of the Bilsdale Hunt in the parlour of the old Sun Inn. In the picture is Bobby Dawson and the little girl in the window is Ruth Ainsley, aunt of William Ainsley

<http://www.billspics.co.uk/the-old-sun-inn-stokesley>

Situated on the Helmsley to Stokesley lies the Sun Inn (when a family cottage it was known as Spout house). Built originally in the 1500s the inn is one of the finest examples of a cruck framed cottage in existence today. First built as a farm tenants cottage before being licensed to sell alcohol and named as the Sun Inn in 1714. Records show that at one time there were 14 members of one family living there and that wasn't counting any guests that stayed overnight too! The old Sun Inn closed its doors to the public in 1914 when it was replaced by the new Sun Inn built close by. Bilsdale Hunt was associated with the Sun Inn for many years and a hunting "pink" is still hung in the old inn today. Although still privately owned by the family who have owned it since 1823 its now cared for by the National Park. **Not quite accurate**

North York Moors National Park <http://www.northyorkmoors.org.uk/visiting/what-to-see-and-do/attractions/attractions-pages/spout-house>

Spout House

This remarkably well preserved 16th century, thatched cruck-framed house was once the local inn and very much the centre of Bilsdale life. It closed its doors for the last time in 1914 when the new Sun Inn was built and from then time stood still.

In 1982 the North York Moors National Park Authority took over its care and you can visit it from Easter to 31 October daily 10am to 4pm except Thursdays.

A beautifully illustrated leaflet is available on site.

Small car park on site.

tyne and wear archives and museums

<http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/engage/blog/ralph-hedleys-hunting-pictures-on-the-north-york-moors/>

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Ralph Hedley's hunting pictures on the North York Moors

Posted by [John Millard](#) on May 21, 2013 [Permalink](#) [Comments \(2\)](#)

I was in Helmsley recently and missed the chance to visit the site of two unusual paintings by Ralph Hedley.



Spout House/the old Sun Inn is on the B1257 as it runs from Helmsley to Stokesley, across the North York Moors National Park. There are not many houses up there, but Spout House has been there for hundreds of years. Built in the 1500s as a farm house, it became the Sun Inn in 1714, and closed in 1914 when it was replaced by the new Sun Inn built close by.

The interior of Spout House/ the old Sun Inn, is featured in Hedley's *Hunting morn* (1895), and the exterior is in his *Counting the game* (1902). Both pictures show rural huntsmen, and both were arranged, possibly commissioned, by Allan Bowes Wilson of Hutton Rudby.



A letter of 12 September 1893, from Allan Bowes Wilson, arranged for Ralph Hedley to go to the old Sun Inn to paint members of

the Bilsdale hunt. Wilson said Hedley would be staying 4 miles away at 'Chop Yat Hostel', and invited him to bring his bicycle.

'Chop Yat' (now called Chop Gate) means 'pedlars' way'. The word 'chop' is said to derive from an Old Norse word 'ceap' or 'kaup' for pedlar or chapman. 'Yat' is a local dialect word for gate or route.

Years after he arranged for Hedley to paint *Hunting morn*, Allan Bowes Wilson commissioned *Counting the game* for £50. It shows the results of a day's shooting laid on the ground outside the old Sun Inn. The window that features in *Hunting morn* is seen from the outside in *Counting the game*, and is surrounded by sun-flowers.

Allan Bowes Wilson ran a sailcloth factory in Hutton Rudby, founded by his father George Wilson. Bales of his sailcloth appear in the bottom right hand corner of Ralph Hedley's painting *The sail loft* (1908) which is on show in the *Northern Spirit* display at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle. One of the bales in the picture is inscribed –

42

1

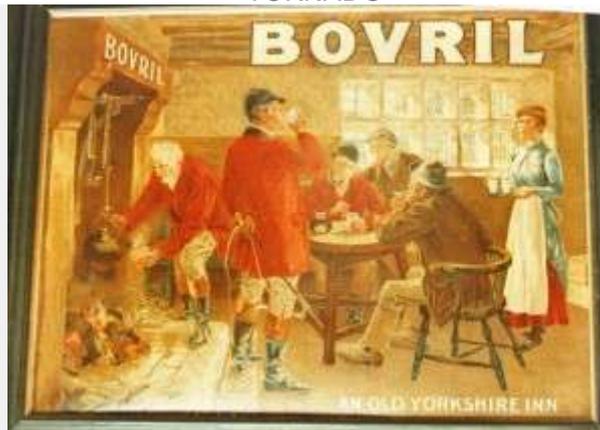
GE^o WILSON

HUTTON RUDBY

CLEVELAND

YORKSHIRE

—
TORNADO



'Hunting morn' as an advert for Bovril.

In his letter Allan Bowes Wilson identified the men of the Bilsdale Hunt depicted in Hedley's painting *Hunting morn* -

- Whipper-in ,Bobby Dowson
- Hunt master, Robert Kitching or is it Robert Garbutt, see below
- Huntsman, Nicholas Spink
- Nicholas Spinks's brother, Richard, was the 'plain-clothes man', not wearing the 'hunting pink'.

The woman with the tray was Phoebe Barr, of the family who ran the Sun Inn, and the girl at the window is her niece, Ruth Ainsley.



'Hunting morn' as an advert for whiskey.

Colour prints of *Hunting morn* were used, apparently without Hedley's permission, to advertise Bovril and Norman Brown whiskey. An extra man appears in the advertising prints and the girl in the window disappears in one of them.

There are also more subtle differences. The round table in the painting has turned legs, whereas they are plain in the prints. The rectangular table disappears altogether in the Bovril print.

Two people who didn't miss a chance to visit Spout House/old Sun Inn, took some great photos in 2005. You can find them at -

http://homepage.ntlworld.com/paulrose.r/Walking%20Diary/NYM%20Walks/Bilsdale%20Views/bilsdale_views.htm

2 Responses to Ralph Hedley's hunting pictures on the North York Moors

1.



R Openshaw says:

[May 27, 2013 at 10:54 pm](#)

Another interesting point about Spout House, is that after Bobby Dawson's death, a gravestone was commissioned by the Hunt, carved with hunting regalia, however the vicar at the time did not allow it to be placed in the churchyard as he viewed the fox head as a pagan symbol, and so it was placed in front of the New Sun Inn where it has been ever since.

The Sun Inn has been in the Ainsley family since the late 1600s, the last landlord passed away earlier this year (2013). It is being refurbished and is soon to reopen under new management and will now be serving food.

[Reply](#)

2.



John Millard says:

[June 3, 2013 at 2:15 pm](#)

Love the story of the gravestone – but I have him as Dowson rather than Dawson.

The 'Paul Rose Walking' link above, has photos of William Ainsley and the Sun Inn in 1905 and 1911 – as you probably noticed – and it's good news that the Sun Inn will reopen.

[Reply](#)

1.

Robert Adam Garbutt says:

[March 1, 2014 at 11:26 pm](#)

The hunt master in the Painting is not Robert Kitching but my great great great grandfather Robert Garbutt who was master twice I think

[Reply](#)

2.



Christopher Martin Watson says:

[September 1, 2014 at 10:35 am](#)

Robert Kitching that is mentioned in the painting is actually Robert Garbutt who is my great great grandfather by marriage. His daughter Monica married my great grandfather Robert (Hooky) Watson in 1881.

Reply

3.  *John Millard says:*

[September 5, 2014 at 9:35 am](#)

Christopher Martin Watson,

Thank you for your comment on the blog "Ralph Hedley's hunting pictures on the North York Moors".

You could well be right in pointing out that the man shown second from the left, facing away from the viewer, is Master of Bilsdale Hunt Robert Garbutt, not Robert Kitching.

A letter of 1893, from Ralph Hedley's friend and patron Allan Bowes Wilson, of Hutton Rudby, made arrangements with Hedley to paint the picture, and he said Robert Kitching was to be included in the painting. But plans could quite easily have changed.

Garbutt and Kitching were apparently joint Master of the Bilsdale Hunt when the picture was painted in 1895.

Robert Garbutt was master of the Bilsdale Hunt twice... at least according to John Fairfax Blakeborough in his snappily-titled book published in 1907 "England's oldest hunt: being chapters of the history of the Bilsdale, Farndale and Sinnington Hunts, collected during several years". On page 47 Blakeborough has a huge list of all the masters of the Bilsdale Hunt. It lists R. Garbutt as Master of the Bilsdale Hunt in 1886-7 (with Nicholas Spink) and 1889-97 (with R. Kitching).

Do you have any photos or further information about your great great grandfather?

John.

4.  *Vincent Allenby says:*

[February 8, 2015 at 11:37 pm](#)

Very interesting to view Ralph Hedley's painting of which I've discovered of late, due to tracing my family back quite extensively. I knew of a public house being within the family at some point, but had no idea of such a direct connection with the Spout House/Sun Inn. It transpires it was the home of my Gt Gt Gt Gt Grandfather, William Ainsley & Gt Gt Gt Gt Grandmother Amelia Hunton & subsequently stayed within the family with my Gt Gt Grandmother Martha Allenby (nee Ainsley) & her son my Gt Grandfather James Allenby returning there for a period.

So to see these works of art are rather fascinating to say the least!

Vincent Allenby.

http://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/history/11338845.Readers_help_put_us_in_the_picture_again/

MEMORIES 183 took us over to Spout House at Bilsdale on the North York Moors, where there has been a pub called the Sun Inn since time immemorial.

A meeting of the Bilsdale Hunt inside the Sun was painted in 1895 by Ralph Hedley. In its day, Hunting Morn was quite a famous poem and was adapted – probably against the artist's wishes – to promote Bovril and Norman Brown whiskey.

“My grandmother, Phoebe Fawbert (nee Barr) was born and raised on Laverock Hall Farm next to the inn,” writes Clive Wilkinson, whose middle name is Fawbert.

“She is the inn girl standing against the table in the controversial Bovril advert.”

For Bill Bailey, in [Consett](#), the pictures took him back to when he, his mother and three brothers were evacuated to Bilsdale in 1941.

They were sent out from Norton, near Stockton, which, due to its proximity to [Teesside](#)'s industries, was regarded as too dangerous.

“Our first night was rather dramatic,” says Bill. “We heard the roar of bombers – the Germans were bombing what they thought were soldiers' huts but which were, in fact, our chicken sheds. The bombs fell short, killing three chickens.”

Bill was allowed to explore the craters, and count the 156 surviving birds.

Ironically, his father and eldest brother spent the war in [Billingham](#) working at ICI, and only one bomb fell inside the factory – the evacuees might have been at less risk if they had stayed at home.

Bill helped on the farm, feeding the chickens, and attended a nearby school. “We had one teacher, a lady on a bike, and our school hours were 9am to 11am because she had another school to look after,” he says. “I enjoyed my three years in Bilsdale. I came back to the Norton Board School two days before my Eleven Plus exam. I could answer one question out of ten. No one passed.”